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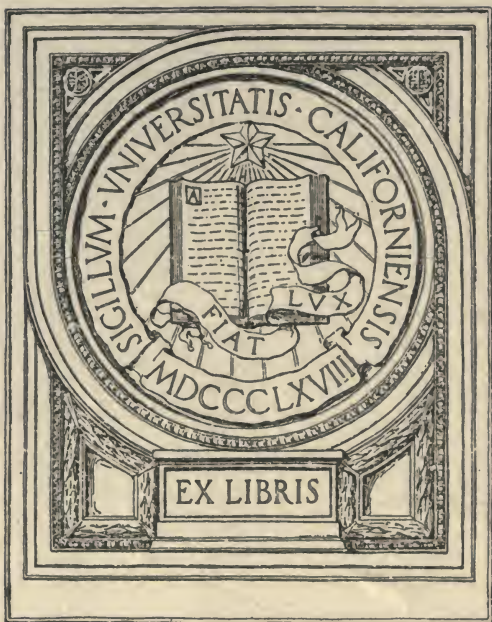


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IN MANTLE BLUE

F. GWYNNE EVANS

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IN MANTLE BLUE

BY

F. GWYNNE EVANS



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IN MANTLE BLUE

THE JOY OF LIFE

THE maiden grace of the sweet shy dawn,
And the wonder of waking earth,
As she feels the trance of the night withdrawn,
And the rapture of re-birth;
The god-like pride of the strong noontide,
And the sunbeams' golden stair,
Oh, these are the things that the long day brings,
And the joy of life is there.


The last great fight of the dying sun
Ensanguining the west;
The tints of the rich cloud-tissue spun
To drape his place of rest;
The magic that calls as the twilight falls,
And the cool of the moth-winged air,
Oh, these are the things that the long day brings,
And the joy of life is there.

THE JOY OF LIFE

The swan-like state of the moon adrift
In the sky's wide silver meres;
The tribes of the stars, and the healing gift
Of the dewfall's fairy tears;
The filmy veil of the mists that sail
Like a phantom fleet in air,
Oh, these are the things that the long day brings,
And the joy of life is there.

Some weaving of music's daedal dream,
The softly rendered strain
Of rippling leaves and murmuring stream,
And the mirth of falling rain;
The wind that moans with a harp's low tones,
And the wind like a trumpet's blare,
Oh, these are the things that the long day brings,
And the joy of life is there.

Some vision fresh to our eyes revealed
Of nature's changeful dower;
Some knowledge new to our minds unsealed
Of art's uplifting power;
The task of delight that is wrought aright
When heart with hand may share,
Oh, these are the things that the long day brings,
And the joy of life is there.



Dear friends whose hearts with our own accord,
Long intimate easy talk
Beside the hearth, or around the board,
Or on the country walk;
Sweet voices heard, gay laughter stirred,
And faces kind and fair,
Oh, these are the things that the long day brings,
And the joy of life is there.

THE VITA NUOVA

AMID the many memories
Of love and lovers long ago
That in the ways of Florence blow,
Still fragrant as the flowers one sees
Fresh daily round her palaces,
The tale that touches most my heart
Is of the boy's prophetic throe,
When Dante where he stood apart
First saw her who was Beatrice.

Scarce had he seen nine summers roll,
And still within his bosom slept
All care for what the future kept
In store for him of joy or dole—
What guerdon he should have for goal,
What weapon should be his to wield.
Sudden the spirit in him leapt:
There in his sight she stood revealed,
The glorious lady of his soul.

Conspicuous midst her childish peers
In goodly crimson robe she went,

So girt and with such ornament
As best beseemed her tender years.
To Dante gazing through his tears

It seemed as though from out the skies
God had his youngest angel sent,
So shone through mortal maiden's guise
A beauty born in heavenly spheres.

Then did his vital spirit shake
Even in its inmost sanctuary,
In prescience of the things to be,
As though the bands of life 'twould break,
And tremblingly these words it spake:

"Behold a god more strong than I,
Who comes to lord it over me."

Fate had indeed sent love, thereby
His life to splendid power to wake.

And while his dazzled eyes still fed
Upon the fairness of the child,
And marvelled, seeing as she smiled
The warmth of radiance round her shed,
Another voice within him said—

"Behold now thy beatitude!"

So were his footsteps reconciled
To tread the path on which were strewed
Not roses, but sharp thorns instead.

Then from his lips burst forth a moan—
 (How many a one more bitter yet
 Was love's vain-longing to beget,
Ere by her smile beside God's throne
He knew his lady for his own)—
 “Alas, unhappy me, for now
 Shall I be often sorely let!”
 But 'twas too late to disavow
The destiny that face had shown.

Love now was ruler of his breast:
 To Love alone he paid his laud:
 Beneath his stern dominion awed
Humbly he followed his behest.
Love suffered him no more to rest,
 But oft command upon him laid
 That he should bend his steps abroad
 To find the little angel maid,
And oft-times went he on the quest.

And whensoever by happy chance
 'Twas given to the boy to meet
 The maiden passing through the street,
And win perhaps a fleeting glance,
How would his pulses throb and dance!
 What thrill would quiver through his frame!
 How buoyantly his heart would beat!

He whispered o'er her blessed name,
And gazed on her in blissful trance.

And well indeed the boy might ween
She looked like one of heavenly birth,
Nor daughter born to man on earth,
So sweet and noble was her mien,
Her ways so gracious to be seen.

Imperious reason bowed before
The knowledge of her passing worth;
Now in his heart for evermore
Abode the image of his queen.

Ah, in this cold untender age,
When grosser gods are deified,
And Love is lightly thrust aside,
'Tis well sometimes to turn the page
That tells how Dante wore the gage
Of Love from boyhood, and how he,
For his dear lady's sake who died,
Pondered the song that was to be
Her and the whole world's heritage.

THE LAND OF DREAMS

WHEN you walk in the land of dreams, my dear,
When you walk in the land of dreams,
May the sun be always shining there,
And the fields be green, and the heaven be fair,
And the scent of roses rise in the air,
When you walk in the land of dreams.

When you walk in the land of dreams, my dear,
When you walk in the land of dreams,
May wonderful birds on the branches sing,
And wonderful flowers in front of you spring,
And wonderful butterflies pass on the wing,
When you walk in the land of dreams.

When you walk in the land of dreams, my dear,
When you walk in the land of dreams,
May a fairy music around you flow,
And a murmur of waters whisper low,
And a soft wind wander to and fro,
When you walk in the land of dreams.

When you walk in the land of dreams, my dear,

When you walk in the land of dreams,
May joyful faces around you meet,
And the joy of life make light your feet,
And a joyful heart in your bosom beat,
When you walk in the land of dreams.

When you walk in the land of dreams, my dear,

When you walk in the land of dreams,
May all things beautiful there abide,
And the hours in gladness onward glide,
And those you love best be nigh your side,
When you walk in the land of dreams.

A MAY NIGHT IN ATHENS

THE moon above Hymettus reigns enthroned:
The Attic land, and Salaminian Sea,
Both to one tint of shimmering silver toned,
Dream of the days that nevermore shall be.
At Athens, in the land of their upbringing,
In the king's garden, nightingales are singing.

Like fiery swords their souls divide the night:
On wings of vibrant flame their voices fly:
Fast flood the radiant notes, like meteors bright
That speed in quivering splendour o'er the sky.
At Love's own forge their glowing shafts they fashion,
And storm the holds of silence with their passion.

The moon in vapour a moment veils her face,
And all the thicket suddenly is still;
Then she again invests their trysting-place
With tender witchery, and the rippling trill
Peals forth afresh, as if their faith were plighted
To see their patroness with song required.

Look, there is one on yon acacia tall,
With tremulous throat uplifted to the sky;
Now his whole frame throbs with the amorous call,
And now he pauses for his mate's reply.
What human lover e'er so fiercely pleaded?
What maiden e'er so meltingly acceded?

Ah, never sounded even to Sappho's lute
Notes that were filled with frenzy so divine;
Nor e'er Sicilian shepherd in his flute
Breathed such love-rapture 'neath the shady pine;
No strain so sweet to rustic pipe was granted
In green Arcadian pastures, Pan-enchanted.

Mute are the songs of Sappho's joy and pain,
Lost in the limbo of forgotten years;
Nor may Sicilian echoes tell again
Tales of the love-lorn shepherd's hopes and fears;
A sombre silence reigns, that none may waken,
In desolate Arcadia, Pan-forsaken.

The intervening ages that have fled
A seal of sorrow on our lips have set,
And with the tears of hopeless misery shed
By countless multitudes our eyes are wet;
We are not heirs of all experienced gladness,
But heirs of all accumulated sadness.

The glorious temples that were wrought of old
Lie piteously despoiled and overthrown:
The images of ivory and gold
Have sunk unnoticed into graves unknown:
The loveliest life achieved by man's endeavour
Is lost, and vacant is its place for ever.

The valleys once so verdant are a waste,
Nor on the mountain grows the goodly tree:
Of all wherewith the land of Greece was graced
Nought is unchanged save changeful sky and sea:
The sea and sky alone to Time's alliance
With rending human hands can bid defiance.

Yet as a sudden scent may ope the gates
Of old remembrance, closed how long ago,
For me this conjuring melody creates
A vision of the past, of fairer show
Than aught to be evoked by mournful token
Of mouldering wall forlorn or column broken.

This is the strain, this the authentic ring,
That won the worship of that earlier world.
When such a song, in such a time of spring,
Long centuries ago the night impearled,
With hearts thus moved have men and women listened,
With the like tears their eyes have also glistened.

I seem to see them standing where I stand—

Those who long since have passed to Lethe's shore—
Poets and sages, lovers hand in hand,

As oft when living they have stood: once more
White robes of dead Athenian maidens flutter;
Long-silent lips the old sweet accents utter.

Rebuilt by song the marble pillars rise,
In long-discarded majesty divine:
Once more in vanished pomp the sanctuaries
Olympian gods and goddesses enshrine.
Fair as a rainbow of the night, the vision
Hovers a moment ere its swift transition.

And still the nightingales sing on, sing on,
Unconscious necromancers: nought they heed
Our human history of greatness gone,
The passing of an epoch or a creed:
Though realms are lost, and empires rent asunder,
A falling leaf will move them to more wonder.

This charge they keep, this gospel they unfold,
Preachers intelligible in every tongue,
That though the world be perishable and old
Love is immortal, love is always young;
Never the language on his lips may alter,
His throne may fail not, nor his faith e'er falter.

Now through all future years, in joy or stress,
 Whate'er else fade, this memory still shall stay,
Sweet in the spice of unforgetfulness,
 How once, upon a moon-lit night of May,
At Athens—(ah, the magic echo ringing)—
In the king's garden nightingales were singing.

THE RE-BIRTH OF VENUS

Youths and maidens, follow her train :
Venus comes to the earth again.

SHE who maketh the world her slave,
Foam-born goddess, of all most fair,
Wafted over the dancing wave
Comes with beautiful body bare,
Girt about with her golden hair :
Lo, she comes, and our hearts are fain.
Youths and maidens, follow her train :
Venus comes to the earth again.

Straight she stands on a curved sea-shell,
Chaste and innocent, grave and sweet :
Fragrant zephyrs escort her well,
Roses flutter around her feet :
Spring comes smiling her steps to greet,
Ocean murmurs a soft refrain.
Youths and maidens, follow her train :
Venus comes to the earth again.

Those her wonderful wistful eyes
On strange visions afar are cast.
Dreams she haply of love that dies,
Or of love that for e'er will last?
Dreams she haply of days long past,
Dreams of pleasure and dreams of pain?
Youths and maidens, follow her train:
Venus comes to the earth again.

All her temples are overthrown,
All her altars are bare and cold:
Long her honour has lapsed unknown,
Bleak the centuries o'er her rolled;
Now once more shall her praise be told,
Now anew will we build her fane.
Youths and maidens, follow her train:
Venus comes to the earth again.

Dead and done are the loveless years:
Captive beauty again goes free:
Venus, visible queen, appears:
Ye her votaries then that be
Haste to hail her in mirth and glee;
Venus, mother of Love, doth reign.
Youths and maidens, follow her train:
Venus comes to the earth again.

THE BURIAL OF QUEEN GUINEVERE

WHO are these
Drawing near with dirge and dole?
What is this that they are bearing
Mid a hundred torches flaring?
Bow the head!
Mary Mother rest her soul!
Bend the knees!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

Sad and slow
Onward comes the solemn train.
She who reigned o'er feast and tourney
Taketh now her latest journey.
Softly tread!
She hath done with joy and pain;
Oh, speak low!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

Sombre steeds
Draw the car with measured pace;
Bells beside the bier are ringing,
Silver censers round it swinging.
Jesu dread,
Of Thy mercy grant her grace!
Mary pleads.
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

See her lie,
Tapers at her head and feet,
Frankincense of pleasant savour
On the pall of purple favour
O'er her spread;—
All as for her birth is meet.
Sigh, oh sigh!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

By her side
Guard is none of knightly spears.
Seven monks the coffin follow,
And an eighth is there whose hollow
Eyes are red,
What with watchings and with tears.
Woe betide!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

E'er they keep
 Vigil by her night and day;
 Faint their steps; their voices falter
 As they chant the holy psalter;
 Sore bested
 Seem they with the weary way.
 Weep, oh weep!
 Guinevere the Queen is dead.

Say, oh say,
 Who those seven monks may be;
 Heads that now the cowl are wearing
 Fitter seem the casque for bearing;
 They were bred
 Men, I ween, of proud degree.
 Woe the day!
 Guinevere the Queen is dead.

Seven knights
 Once did they to battle ride;
 Erst on earthly glory centred
 They have other service entered,
 Christ's instead.
 Let us like them put aside
 Vain delights.
 Guinevere the Queen is dead.

20 THE BURIAL OF QUEEN GUINEVERE

But the last,
Rede, oh rede me right his name;
Marred his mien, his body broken;
Yet therein by certain token
May be read
Witness of a warrior's fame.
All is past.
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

This is he,
Brave Sir Lancelot of the Lake;
Noblest knight of Arthur's table,
Now he mourns a monk in sable;
He hath fled
Life's vain pageant for her sake.
Woe is me!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

His true heart
Had she for her highest throne;
Naught his soul from her might sever,
Nor none other maiden ever
Might he wed,
So his love was hers alone.
O brave heart!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

At the stake
When she stood in Carlisle town,
He against them all returning
Saved her body from the burning;
Oft he bled
Fighting for her fair renown.
Sad heart break!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

Save herein
None knew Lancelot ever fail;
Aye, had not his earthly passion
Bound him in so fast a fashion
He had fed,
He too, on the Holy Grail.
Oh great sin!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

Ah, that she
So should break her wedded troth!
Ah, that he untrue to duty,
True to nothing but her beauty,
Love-misled,
So should stain his knightly oath!
Grieve must we.
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

Baleful truth
That undid the Table Round!
Baleful was the beauty's wonder
That a realm hath rent asunder,
And hath shed
Blood of thousands on the ground.
Yet have ruth.
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

Ere the end
Shame and grief upon them fell;
They who hand in hand had thridden
Long the ways of love forbidden,
Conscience-led,
Bade at length their last farewell.
Late amend!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

She of old
Stateliest lady, proud as fair,
Robes and gems from off her casting,
Unto almsdeeds, prayer, and fasting
Humbly sped;
Nuns' clothes black and white she ware.
Now behold!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

All his strength
He hath spent with penance done.
Shrunk form and features wasted
Tell of meat and drink untasted;
His life's thread
Hath but little while to run.
Rest at length!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

In his cell,
Bowed before the Holy Rood,
Day and night in deep contrition
Seeks he for his sins remission;
Heavenly bread
Hath he for his dearest food.
List the knell!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

Shall she gain
Favour in her Maker's eye?
Penitent, assoiled, and shriven
May she hope to be forgiven,
Or like lead
Must her sins upon her lie,
Mourned in vain?
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

24 THE BURIAL OF QUEEN GUINEVERE

There was one,
Kneeling at the Saviour's board,
Bathed His feet with ointment scented,
One who sinned and who repented;
She, 'tis said,
First beheld the risen Lord.
Oh, make moan!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

So we trust,
Since a holy nun she died,
Making unto God repayment,
At the last in shining raiment,
Pardonèd,
She shall sit at His right side.
Dust to dust!
Guinevere the Queen is dead.

RUSH-LIGHTS

SEE how from some great city in the night
The gathered glare sets all the sky aglow,
Each street, each building, endless row on row,
To the full sum contributing its mite.
Think'st thou that if one single farthing-light
Should flicker out in one poor room below,
The luminous heaven the loss thereof would know,
Or for such diminution shine less bright?

So, if in space our earthly firmament,
Yea, our whole solar system were to fail,
Extinguished by some sudden awful hand,
'Twould be but as that rush-light that was spent,
So vast, so inconceivable the scale
On which God's great metropolis is planned.

PENUEL

IN day-time, when the heaven, clouded or clear,
Seems no more than an overhanging bound
Set to encompass our small earth around,
And hem us in its narrow atmosphere,
Then to the little things that lie anear
We chain our thoughts, and gaze upon the ground,
Blind to the spaces awful and profound
Wherein we are whirled, too heedless e'en for fear.

But when with myriad stars night strews the sky,
And unimaginable depths unscrolls,
Yet these mere fringes of the depths beyond,
To this high challenge cited to respond,
Like Jacob with the angel, our lone souls
Rise up and wrestle with infinity.

THE RIDDLE

WERE it well done for those who fail to find
Firm basis for their feet in any creed
In desperation to deny their need,
And of fixed purpose thrusting from their mind
The mightiest problems that beset mankind
As all insoluble, to hold in heed
Nought but integrity of word and deed,
To dream and vision resolutely blind?

Nay, but 'twere better evermore to scan,
Like shipwrecked mariners, the shoreless sea
Washing the island of life's little span.
Though no sail come, yet as his gaze goes free
What infinite horizons loom for man,
Whose claim to greatness is his mystery!

MONA LISA

LIKE some Greek fate a Scopas might devise,
Some Circe in her strange enchanted isle,
This face, a Sphinx beside a northern Nile,
Invites the fancies that it still defies.
Vainly within these features we surmise
World-wisdom, weariness, irony, or guile.
Who shall reveal the secret of her smile,
The meaning of those enigmatic eyes?

Like life itself she looks on us. Even so
In life's inscrutable lineaments we find
Hints of some hidden undeciphered mind.
Or is it mere illusion? Did we know,
That mask of mystery may be all a show,
With nought but disillusionment behind.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

THE muffled bell tolls for the old year done.

The mournful strokes, heavy and hushed and low,
Solemnly, slowly, float across the snow,
With dull reverberation, one by one.

They sound the knell of dreams our fancy spun
Round what were future days a year ago,
When hopes looked substance, which at length we
know

Were only shadows fading with the sun.

Yet faint not, though ere now to failure doomed.

In hearts that hold the wasted past in scorn
Shall truer, nobler hopes and aims be born.
Hark! even now the midnight hour has boomed,
And o'er the grave where old hopes lie entombed
The pealing bells proclaim the New-Year morn.

CHRISTMAS EVE

'TIS Christmas Eve, and starry is the night;
Yet watch not. Nevermore aloft shall glow
The glory of the Lord, as long ago,
When Syrian shepherds trembled at the sight.
Ne'er shall descend again the angel-flight,
Peace and good-will towards men on earth to show;
Christ comes no more as once of old below,
But dwells unseen for ever in his height.

Watch not; for that first Christmas Eve of all
Mid the vain crowd no vision was unsealed,
In city or camp, in court or princely hall.
Only to simple shepherds were revealed
Tidings of joy, that led them from the field,
To seek the sign, the babe within the stall.

AFFINITIES

AS in some cave, impervious to the light,
Drops trickling from the roof congeal, and grow
To cones, one pendant, one opposed below,
Whose tapering apices at length unite
To make one alabaster pillar white,
Which, as the ages pass, with increase slow
Perfects its linked circumference, till lo!
A smooth round column stands the stalactite.

So through eternity twin souls converge
Towards their predestined union till they merge
And in one common essence are combined;
Then, mid the tears of time, come whatso may,
The fibres of their being, day by day,
But more indissolubly are intertwined.

DARK DAYS

LIKE some old villager, who views with pain
The pleasant woods, anigh where he was bred,
Felled to the ground and disafforested,
Sadly I see my mind's despoiled domain.
Lopped are the leafy coverts of my brain,
And all their vernal foliage stripped and shed:
The singing birds that nestled there are fled,
And children come in quest of flowers in vain.

No longer, light as fairies on the green,
Dance the gay forms that feigning fancy weaves;
Shy visionary shapes no more are seen,
Like Hamadryads peeping through the leaves:
Only dark thoughts and dull despairs convene,
And whisper like a midnight band of thieves.

SOLITUDES

THE myriad stars that stud the Milky Way
Appear, by undivining eyes reviewed,
Members of some close-clustering multitude,
Met there to keep celestial holiday.
Yet those thronged stars, in distant dense array,
Are in no narrow territory mewed;
But each, with awful sovereignty indued,
O'er its own universe holds lonely sway.

So we to one another are unknown;
Though hand in hand and heart to beating heart
Be pressed, we yet in soul are sundered far.
In the self's world, where each must dwell alone,
Man from his fellow-man is more apart
Than in illimitable space is star from star.

THE SPIRIT'S PALESTINE

PASSIONATE pilgrim in Love's ways, oh thou
Who to that Lady Beauty of thy quest,
More than to all to thee made manifest,
The rainbow-splendour of diverse powers did'st vow,
Are all thy pain and thy vain-longing now
Assuaged at length? Ah, hast thou met with rest,
Pressing those scripted petals to thy breast,
More dear than bay-leaves to thy mortal brow?

Yea, surely thou, who did'st on earth aspire
But to be Beauty's bondman, now hast won
The freedom of her face, thy new world sun;
And Love at last, who here seven times in fire
Refined thy heart, in guerdon of service done
Hath led thee to the goal of thy desire.

DELIVERANCE

How sweet, from the disturbance and the din
Of surging life's tumultuous work and play,
In some cathedral reverently to stray,
And hear the solemn organ notes begin.
Soon as the tones on our distraction win
Environing circumstance dissolves away;
We are not of the world, nor of a day:
Sorrow is overpast, and pain, and sin.

Like to that angel who set Peter free,
And loosed the bonds of his captivity,
And led him through the iron city gate,
So winged, so shining, music bids arise
The imprisoned soul, and follow where it flies,
Beyond the enclosing wards of time and fate.

IN GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL

DOWN the great pillars of the Norman nave
The music peals with full, majestic tone,
As of some king of old upon his throne,
Delivering dooms in speech august and grave.
Now is it plaintive as a midnight wave,
That shakes its heart out in a long-drawn moan:
Now sounds it like the trumpet that was blown
When God his covenant in thunder gave.

There is no splendour that it hath not seen,
No joy or wonder that it hath not shared:
No solitude where it hath never been,
No pain or grief for which it hath not cared:
It knoweth all the words and ways of earth,
Yet yearns for ever for some great new-birth.

SHADOWS

'TIS told how travellers on a mountain side,
Compass'd with clouds, and fearful lest they miss
Their path that skirts some awful precipice,
Have seen the vapours in their front divide,
And there beheld, with faces terrified,
Strange menacing spectres o'er the dark abyss,
Nor known, in that weird metamorphosis,
'Twas naught but their own shadows they descried.

So from the light of life man's image, cast
Upon the mists that overhang the grave,
Deludes his misconceiving soul with dread.
He calls it many names, and bows his head;
Nor can he go his way with spirit brave
Till the shade's tyranny be overpast.

COURAGE!

BE of good courage! Howsoe'er the wheel
Of Fortune turn, yea, in the sorest strait,
When no consolement can amend our state,
Nor comfortable words have power to heal,
This strenuous call, that makes its high appeal
To the last guard, shall serve to elevate
Our hearts above the circumstance of fate,
And set the sinews of the will like steel.

Be of good courage! What though hope be none
That the fast-ravelled skein be e'er undone,
Though the arch-fiend Despair almost prevail,
Yet doth this watchword, seemingly so cold,
The potency of such resistance hold
As yet shall make the powers of darkness quail.

THE TRYST

THROUGH the deep beech-wood, where below our feet,
Pale as a phantom in the twilight gray,
The fading valley of the Severn lay
We walked together, that June evening sweet.
Resting awhile—a fallen trunk our seat—
Half mirthful, half in earnest, we did say,
At that same place and hour, that self-same day,
A century thence, once more we all would meet.

Ah, after passage of the hundred years,
To us, in alien forms, in distant spheres,
Shall this be as a thing once dimly dreamed?
Haply no mortal memories may abide;
Or haply, for the ways of fate are wide,
The pledge shall be remembered and redeemed.

ON SELSLEY HILL

BEYOND the Severn, o'er the hills of Wales,
What glorious hues before our eyes unfold
Of crimson sky and clouds inaureoled,
As dragon-like the dying sun exhales
His fiery breath! The heaven now slowly pales;
Now by lone stars its outposts are patrolled;
And now by twilight secrecy made bold
The slender moon her virgin form unveils.

This hour, a golden trove by fortune found,
Henceforth shall memory in that chamber hoard
Where all her goodliest treasures are enstored,
And 'gainst the thief oblivion creeping round
Shall, like the Cherubim at Eden's bound,
Keep watch before the gates with flaming sword.

EVENING ON THE WATER

TWILIGHT and silence! Charioted on high
The moon peeps through the poplars, and doth throw
Soft silver kisses on the wave below,
As if Endymion there asleep did lie.
Along the horizon-line the summer sky
Still flushes with a last faint after-glow:
In silence on the cool still pond we row,
Thinking of things to come, and things gone by.

What of the past? Alternate joy and pain;
Faces to greet or ne'er to greet again;
Much lost and missed; yet much too gained and
found.

What of the future? Fraught with hope and gloom,
Of all or naught potential, it doth loom
Solemn as night itself now drawn around.

ST. MARY'S SPIRE, STAMFORD

FAR o'er the jar and dust of mundane things,
Poised on its tall gray tower, behold it stand,
St. Mary's spire, the queenliest in the land,
Cleaving the region where the skylark sings
With flight as confident as angels' wings:
In strength how gracious, how sublimely planned
For beauty, and how venerable the brand
Of its six hundred winters' weatherings.

What genius in their piety had those
Its unknown builders! If in work prayer be,
More than all masses said for their repose
This record of their faith shall serve for plea
Before God's throne, as heavenward still it goes
In solemn sempiternal litany.

THE HERMES OF PRAXITELES

A GOD of youthful Greece, serene and strong,
He gazes into space with dreamy eyes,
Heedless of us, his modern votaries:
Not unto our dull world doth he belong.
He seems to wait the white-robed festal throng,
The athletes crowned with the wild-olive prize,
The pipes, the flutes, the loud frenetic cries,
Priest and libation, sacrifice and song.

Vainly he waits. They come not. While he slept
Iconoclastic time fast onward rolled.
In vain that magic of beauty hath he kept;
The gods we serve to-day are sad and old.
The palsy of age hath o'er our senses crept,
And all our life is colourless and cold.

LOOE

I

A LITTLE town beside a Cornish bay,
Where white-washed houses creep from ledge to
ledge:

The thick trees cluster round the water's edge:
Behind, the rising downs roll far away.
About the river-banks, the live-long day,
The screaming seagulls wheel and wade and dredge:
Often the wild-duck pass in hurrying wedge,
And herons in the shallows hunt their prey.

Thither the ocean's inrush daily brings
Echoes and memories of the former things,
Heroic deeds and glorious days of old;
And there as often in the ebbing tide
Symbol and type is seen of fallen pride,
Whose name has perished, and whose tale is told.

LOOE

II

WHAT passionate hearts went down, in days that were,
To the sea in ships from out these narrow lanes!
What wild blood pulsed and bounded in their veins!
How greatly did they do, how greatly dare!
To find and fight the foe, what odds so e'er,
Or from the ocean wrest adventurous gains:
To live as free-men, and from foreign chains
To save their own dear land, this was their care.

Yet if so high has England's glory surged
That in its flood thine own is now submerged,
Sad therefore, little town, thou shalt not be;
For even so must thy small river yield
The merry life it led by hill and field
To swell the triumph of the conquering sea.

NAPLES

CIRCE of cities, sorceress divine,
Child of the sun, fair queen of life and light,
Still from thy phials, mixed with magic sleight,
Thou pourest forth the old insidious wine.
Yet no more is the proffered cup malign,
Though potent as of yore. The philtre's might
Doth mirth in place of heaviness invite,
Of dull dis-ease the effectual anodyne.

Still thou art mistress, as old story tells,
Of all the lore of witchcraft—subtle spells,
Enchantments, incantations, wizardries;
The web thou weavest still ensnares the eye
With warp and woof of blending earth and sky,
And what strange singing haunts thy charmed seas!

AMALFI

PERCHED where'er cliff or crag yield vantage-place
Amalfi gazes down upon the sea,
Even as they say Narcissus formerly
Grew love-sick for his own wave-mirrored face.
Time here seems halting for a breathing-space,
As though, world-wearied, he were fain to flee
To days that have been from the days to be,
And here unmarked reverse his arduous race.

Which of the bygone scenes would he recall?
Some sunrise, as with swiftly-flashing oar
Greek mariners pushed forth their dark-prowed
ships,
Or some old sunset, as beside the shore
A princess with her maidens played at ball,
And song and laughter rippled on their lips?

LA CAVA

WITHIN this valley Peace hath made her home.
Of the high hills her walls are builded sure;
Of fields and gardens her mosaic floor;
For roof she hath the heaven's aerial dome.
Within these precincts he who lists to roam
May see the fairest face e'er beauty wore;
May hear all music in the pine-trees' score,
And read all wisdom in the meadows' tome.

Nor empty shall the stranger hence depart;
Not as of old the host would speed his guest,
Laden with golden gifts of curious art;
But with a more exceeding treasure blest,
A deep and all-pervading sense of rest,
And Peace herself, sweet Peace, within his heart.

CORDOVA

NOT from these squalid lanes, this beggar crowd,
Can vexed imagination re-create
The Mecca of the Western Caliphate,
That splendid Cordova, polite and proud,
Which, when all Europe was in darkness bowed,
Saved single-handed from their low estate
Science and letters, else by monkish hate
And knightly scorn to swift extinction vowed.

But pass to yonder mosque when twilight falls:
There, as Time present mid the glooming walls
Fades to the shadow it shall be at last,
Accustomed to the dusk, thine eyes may learn
Down the dim pillared vistas to discern
The mournful phantom of the mighty Past.

EASTER-DAY EVENING IN MADRID

ON this fair evening of this Easter day

The crowd from out the bull-ring streams apace.

The bulls have been despatched with proper grace,
And now the world of fashion drives away

Decked out in all its superfine array—

Shawls and mantillas, fans and antique lace:

A self-pleased smile illumines every face,
As through the streets they make a last display.

They knelt at morn, with head and heart inclined,

Before the altar: now they feel again
Duty is done, when they have left behind
A score of mangled horses. It is odd

That on this day of all, in Christian Spain,
The Devil thus can get the laugh of God.

LODOVICO IL MORO

THE arched gate oped and the armèd gang
Rode through with noise and din:
The heavy drawbridge upward swang,
The doors fell-to with a sullen clang,
And loud the lowered portcullis rang,
As they led their prisoner in.

His stern pride stifled all craven throes
Of fear before his doom.
Unfaltering through the castle close
Whose walls were gay with the climbing rose
He walked in chains mid his ruthless foes
To the door of his living tomb.

“Now look thy last on the sun,” they said,
“Yon sun that shines so fair;
For never again upon thy head
Thy whole life long shall its light be shed,
But thy body alone, when thou art dead,
Shall come to the upper air.”

So he turned and gazed, intent to gain
Against the years to be
Some print that memory might ingrain
Of the parting moment, as full and plain
As the crowded vision that floods the brain
Of a man drowned out at sea.

But a trifle oft can the mind invade
As we cross fate's Rubicon;
His eye was caught by a bee that strayed
In the web of a spider's ambushade,
And e'en while he watched the stir it made
The moment's boon was gone.

With what wild agony of despair
He bade the sun farewell;
Ah, with what silent soul-wrung prayer
He followed them down the winding stair,
Where never his feet might upward fare,
Deep down to the dismal cell.

One drew from his belt a bunch of keys,
And loosened bolt and chain;
And the prisoner felt his life-blood freeze,
As the chill of the chamber seemed to seize
His bones, like the mistral's icy breeze
That smites the shuddering plain.

From a single deep-splayed slit alone,
By a faint and failing track,
A gleam on the grim gray walls was thrown,
On the cold flag floor, and the vault of stone,
That many a captive's hollow moan
Still seemed to echo back.

They thrust him forward, and, "See," they cried,
With taunt of savage spite,
"See, here is thy new-won dukedom wide,
Well fenced from foes upon every side,
Where thou shall be lord till death betide,
And none dispute thy right."

And so with a parting bitter mock,
Forth from the cell they passed.
The door was closed with a sounding shock,
The huge key grated in the lock,
The bolt shot home in the lintel block,
And he was alone at last.

A moment he sank on the bare stone seat,
And the cold sweat dewed his brow:
Then he rose in frenzy to his feet,
And wildly on the door he beat:
He heard their steps on the stair retreat.
Oh God, have mercy now!

At first for his wrath he could not gauge
Misfortune's full flood-tide—
To be torn from life's gay, crowded stage,
And mewed like a wild beast in a cage,
That paces to and fro in rage,
Sick for the forest wide!

'Twas unbelievable that he,
The man deemed heretofore
The mightiest lord in Italy,
Henceforth for all his days should be
Penned in a dungeon, ne'er to see
Freedom or country more.

But soon through the mists of his seething brain
He saw his mirrored fate.
The whole black horror stood out plain,
And his soul sank deep in a sea of pain,
Whence it should never emerge again
Except by death's dark gate.

The living world of deed and thought,
Of movement and of strife,
The pomp of power so dearly bought,
The days with busy pleasure fraught,
All, all were gone, and left was naught
But awful death in life.

'Twas ne'er to be his again to place
 His hand in a friendly hand.
 No more should he look on a woman's face,
 No more a woman's form embrace,
 From love, ah, love, life's crowning grace,
 Henceforth for ever banned.

The torments that at first he bore
 No tongue hath skill to tell.
 Each single day of the primal score,
 As on from dawn to dusk it wore,
 Seemed long as all his life before,
 And scorched with fire of hell.

Yet even the direst agony
 Its force at length must spend.
 The stabbing torture came to be
 A dull and formless misery,
 The wretchedness that can foresee
 No solace, hope, or end.

He strove at first of the passing days
 Some reckoning to make;
 But the count grew blurred in a doubtful haze,
 And his memory giddy, as one that strays
 At random midst of a tangled maze,
 Nor knows which way to take.

What time the bars of his cell between
Came wafts of soft warm air,
And the song rose up of the birds unseen,
He felt that spring on the earth was green,
And oh, in his heart was the hunger keen
For joys he might not share.

By the voices of careless boys at play
Beside the river's brim,
Or the scent sometimes of the new-mown hay,
That from far-off fields to his cell found way,
He knew that summer assumed its sway,
But nevermore for him.

When autumn garnered the golden sheaves,
And set the woods alight,
He guessed it but by the drifted leaves
That the wailing wind from the poplar thieves,
Or the hush that falls on the widowed eaves
When the swallows take their flight.

When the days were dark and soon o'ertold,
And the blood in his veins ran slow,
And his limbs were stiffened and numb with cold,
He knew that the winter-chill had hold
Of the frozen land, and its ways were stoled
In robes of silent snow.

How oft, in effort to dispel
The present's hideous face,
Would he close his eyes, for his mind to dwell
On scenes he knew and loved so well
In the land that doth all lands excel,
The land of his home and race.

He saw the cities enclosed about
With battlemented walls,
With rampart deep, and tower stout,
And frowning bastion and redoubt,
And the gates where men go in and out,
And afar the white road crawls.

He saw in the city's narrow bound
The stately duomo fair,
The lofty dome, the churches round,
With tapering campaniles crowned,
Wherefrom he seemed to hear the sound
Of bells that fill the air.

He saw the traffic, the teeming trade,
And the mart where the merchants meet;
The costly wares on the booths displayed,
By the hands of cunning craftsmen made,
The country stuff on the stalls arrayed,
And the chapmen in the street.

He pictured the goodly Lombard plain,
 With river, and road, and tree,
The soaring peaks of the mountain chain,
The flat fields covered with vine and grain,
The wealth of sun, and the welcome rain,
 And the wind that wanders free.

He saw the peasants with spade and hoe
 Their busy labour ply,
The lumbering carts that creaking go,
And the great sleek oxen pacing slow,
With coats as white as the Alpine snow
 That gleams in the azure sky.

He saw the folk for the fairing met,
 And the flasks of good red wine,
With glasses in the arbour set
Beneath a shady vineleaf net,
And heard the clink of the castanet
 In the dance at the day's decline.

For never, oh, never again, once known,
 Is loosed, in weal or woe,
The spell that Italy alone
By some strange witchery all her own
Upon men's hearts from of old has thrown,
 And evermore shall throw.

And now in a vivid dream would all
 Be as in bygone time,
 And he again in his palace-hall,
 With squires and pages at his call,
 Mid ladies with their light foot-fall
 And their laughter's silver chime.

Or he dreamed of his fair and youthful bride
 Who lived so brief a while,
 And the mirth that was theirs at the marriage-tide,
 As they rode through Milan side by side.
 Ah, Beatrice, happier she who died
 Ere fortune ceased to smile!

Or to the hunt he went his way,
 With hawk, and hound, and horn;
 Or rode out with a rich array
 To feast or joust or pageant gay,
 Or set his forces for the fray
 Upon the battle-morn.

But oh, how cruel 'twas to wake
 To that bare narrow cell!
 And there as he lay his frame would shake
 With long-drawn sobs, and his heart would ache
 For pain that bitter dawn should break
 Upon sleep's kindly spell.

Awhiles he strove to recall the taste
Of glories known of yore;
There on the wall, still uneffaced,
His hand a knightly helmet traced,
Such as of old his brows encased,
When he rode armed to war.

And on its crest a plume he drew
With goodly feathers tall;
And floating far behind it flew
As if indeed the wind it knew
That once upon his forehead blew
Beyond his prison wall.

But 'tis told in that lovers' tale renowned
How, in remembrance made
Of former happier things, not drowned
In present sorrow, nay, but crowned
With a fresh sorrow, more profound
Than that it sought to aid.

And e'en by such remembrance stung
He wrote out large below,
Translated to his gaolers' tongue,
Those piteous words by Dante sung,
That from Francesca's lips were wrung
When she rehearsed her woe.

Sometimes the sound of the passing-bell
 Brought news of a soul's release;
 And then on his knees in prayer he fell,
 And prayed for the day when the slow-tolled knell
 At length to a heedless world should tell
 That he too was at peace.

Yet Heaven delayed deliverance till
 The cup's last dregs were drained.
 The solitude but served to kill
 His brain and break his heart and will;
 The man at length was gone, but still
 The breath of life remained.

Ah! in this form of hideous guise,
 This shrunken figure bowed,
 With matted locks and wild mad eyes,
 This thing of hoarse unhuman cries,
 How now should Milan recognize
 Her former lord so proud?

And so year slowly followed year,
 Till nine long years were passed;
 And then, with none to shed a tear,
 Did Death the Friend at length appear,
 And his body was borne to the daylight clear
 And his soul had rest at last.

AUTUMN

THESE halcyon autumn days
A soft transparent veil of tender haze
Clings to the hills, and makes them seem
Of giant height: no motion sways
The trees with palest amber hues agleam:
Even the topmost poplar leaves are still,
And all the land lies sleeping in a silver dream.
Demeter hath been generous to fulfil
Her ancient annual charge
Of queenly tendance over fruit and grain:
'Neath the beneficence of sun and rain
The fields have yielded increase large;
And safe in farmstead, barn, and bin
The goodly harvest has been gathered in.
The ricks are thatched; and now the ploughman goes,
Ere frosts begin,
Turning the stubble into long brown rows
Behind his patient slowly-plodding team,
Whose wet sides heave and steam,
As in the furrows up and down they toil
Laboriously from dawn till the day close,

And darkness gives them respite from the yoke.
From scattered homesteads and from heaps of soil
And smouldering wastage lazily upcoil
Faint azure wreaths of smoke,
That cannot rise and vanish in the heavy air,
But slowly spreading hang there like a cloak,
To blend at length with the sad mists that fare
At sundown o'er the land, like furtive ghosts,
Stealing in serried shadowy hosts
To take the evening captive unaware.
Ere long, emboldened by successes won,
They will be slow to yield their vantage-posts
To challenging dawn, nor will the advancing sun
Dislodge them from their conquests: only at last
The wind's artillery with unpitiful blast
Shall rake them and expel their garrison.
Then will the wind, a fierce iconoclast,
In merciless mood attack
The unresisting woods, and sack
Their hoarded gold; thus will he night and day
Rifle and rob and ruin, thus will go
Tearing and trampling, leaving in his track
Havoc and desolation and dismay,
Till nought remains for him to overthrow.
So stripped and shivering will the land be left,
Till winter grieving to behold it thus bereft
Shall gently clothe it with a soft-spun robe of snow.

A COTSWOLD SONG

IN the whole of England I love best
A little corner in the West—
The Cotswold land with its hills and vales.
Oh, very dear is the sight to me
From the breezy commons wide and free
Of the Severn flowing to the sea,
And the distant blue of the hills of Wales.

'Tis a goodly thing on the ridge to stand,
And look abroad upon the land,
On farm and village, on field and down.
Oh, fair it is in a robe of snow,
And when in spring the bluebells grow,
And fair when the wayside roses blow,
Or the woods of autumn are golden-brown.

Old gabled houses gray with time
And cottages where the roses climb
By every slope and hollow stand.
And the end of my song shall be to tell
Of the folk who in the Cotswolds dwell,
That I love them one and all right well;
And this is my praise of the Cotswold land.

THE WORSHIP OF JOY

WHEN earth's foundations first were made
And the corner stone thereof was laid,—
(So the Lord to Job in the whirlwind said
Whereon in wrath he trod)—
Oh, then for the joy that in them sprang
The morning stars together sang,
And space to its farthest borders rang
With the shout of the sons of God.

Such is the joy we may daily share
Beholding earth that it is fair,
And the sea that the Lord hath appointed there
To roll within its bound;
As we watch the sun like a bridegroom rise,
And the mystic vision of evening skies,
And the wonderful world that before us lies
Of goodly sight and sound.

Such the supreme and splendid joy
That man, intended to employ
His powers to make and not destroy,
Feels, when achieved and whole

THE WORSHIP OF JOY

He sees some wonder of human skill,
The image of his mind and will,
That with its glory doth fulfil
The passion of his soul.

It may be a work of the mason's hand,
Or a thing by the cunning craftsman planned,
Or a gorge or river with daring spanned
That wakes the heart's delight;
Or a statue to perfection wrought,
Or the touch divine by a painter caught,
Or a poem aglow with lustred thought,
Or music's swallow-flight.

Such joy, if we the Lord would praise,
'Tis ours to gather, all our days,
Along the city's crowded ways,
Or in the fields apart.
For works whereof Himself was proud
Not best of those whose heads are bowed
Is God adored, but of who aloud
Cry in their joy of heart.

Fortunate they who can redeem
The ore of joy where'er it gleam,
From many a golden lode and seam,
From many a hidden mine;

And who with skilful hand profuse
Make common coin for others' use
The precious metal they produce,
 Stamped with a royal design.

SOUTH AFRICA, 1903

FROM me this vast lone continent may win
Wonder, not love. Though nature and slow time,
Taskmasters of the labouring elements,
With strength Titanic, mightily inspired,
Have piled these mountain-masses, and outcarved,
Aeonian architects, from their grim sides
Deep gorge, and sheer abysm, and wild ravine;
Though over hill and plain, league upon league,
A dusky populace of pine extends
Dominion, and the bosom of the earth
Is decked with scented shrub and delicate flower,
Despite such majesty, such spendthrift grace,
To this proud pageant of South Africa
My heart responds not, failing to discern
Behind its beauty, worn but as a mask,
The informing soul, that soul which mortal men
By word and work, with story and with song,
Slowly through centuries themselves imbreathe
Into the land they love, as once of yore
Pygmalion's warm embracing arms awoke
The marble maiden that his art had shaped

To trembling life. My youthful mind was fed
With those old legends and fair myths that scent
The air of Greece, whereby each storied scene,
Each vale and hill, each river, grove, and shore
Is sweetly haunted, so that it becomes
Itself half-human, and can touch our hearts
With a half-human charm; and so I learnt
To seek in nature more than she can give
From her own source alone. Not tropic coasts
With all their pomp and prodigal opulence
Of splendour many-hued in earth and sky,
And gorgeous bloom and plumage, so could take
My fancy captive as the lands enriched
With fond imaginings of days when men
Shared the dear earth with deities, and dwelt
Compassed about with unsubstantial shapes
Of more than mortal fellow-denizens—
When Oreads wandered on the mountain-heights,
And Naiads dwelt by sacred spring and stream,
When in the solemn grove each ancient oak
Enclosed a guardian Dryad, and with forms
Faintly discerned mid thick concealing trees
Shy wood-nymphs flitted, or a sportive faun
Peeped from behind a bole, while haply nigh
Great Pan reposed, and the confederate wood
Was heavy with a sense of rumorouse awe.

Such magic thrill, such sympathetic charm

Of old association fancy-fraught
Belongs not here: these wide unpeopled wastes
Breathe of no gracious past: naught here evokes
Mysterious echoes and dim memories
That cling like dying music round the heart.
Or if aught old there be, it doth but tell
Of barbarous tribes and savage usages,
Dark faiths and horrid rites and gods obscene,
Grim devil-worship, with no lightening ray
Of beauty or of love. 'Twas not these vales
Though fair with flowers of rainbow-tinctured hues
That saw the maid Persephone, what time
She wandered with her playmates, glad of life,
In all the songful ecstasy of youth,
And buds of purest innocence chose
From Flora's earliest children to adorn
Her bosom as a bride's, nor knew the hour
Of that abhorred bridal was at hand,
When she must leave the green fields and the sun,
Leave the dear fragrance of the laughing Spring,
To be the sad queen of the silent dead.
Not here Demeter sorrowing sought her child,
A lonely pilgrim, likened in her grief
To some poor labouring woman early worn
With toil and care, her vain divinity
Merged in the mother's loss—unheeded all
Her customary charge of seed and corn

And harvest, that must forthwith droop and pine,
Denied her sustenance. No hamlet here
Has seen her, hopeless of her quest, at eve
Sink by the roadside and sit motionless,
Only in eyes that ever strained and yearned
Discovering all her solitude of woe.
No hunter in the depths of some dim wood,
Strayed from his fellows, ever here beheld
Artemis armed, with her attendant train
Of virgins, vowed to chastity and cold
Severity of service, sweeping past
Headlong, upon the flying quarry intent.
Nor yet thereafter in some secret glade,
Where, by o'erhanging trees half-hidden, a pool
Fairer than pearl or diamond displays
The alluring invitation of its wave,
Has he surprised the maiden-huntresses
Resting at eve after the chase, or gazed
A moment on immortal limbs unveiled.
Yon mountain-top that communes with the clouds
Ne'er saw Selene from her cold clear height
Stoop to embrace Endymion, where he lay
Dreaming beneath the pines. This angry foam,
In everlasting avalanches dashed
Upon the dread inhospitable shores,
Knows naught of Aphrodite—how she came
Forth from the dimpling ripples, a radiant dream

Of white and tender rose and gleaming gold,
Mother of sweet desire, and fair beyond
Imaginable mortal loveliness.

Ne'er on these hills did Dionysus roam,
Guiding the panthers harnessed to his car
With thyrsus pine-cone-tipped, his slender brow
Begirt with vine-leaves, and the curling shoots
Of the green ivy, while around him leapt
The joyful rout of satyr and of faun
In frenzied merriment, and close behind
The fierce-eyed Maenads and mad Bacchanals
With heaving bosoms and loose-streaming hair
Danced in his train, their lithe ungirdled limbs
Glistening amid the fawn-skins lightly flung
Over their shoulders, as the mountain-breeze
Tossed them aside; some grasping in their hands
The mangled members of a kid, and some
With shrill bewildering din of frantic pipes
And strident cymbals firing to fresh feats
The hierophants of that wild liturgy.

But wherefore speak of fables and of dreams,
Poor visionary things, that nowise serve
For filling of a purse. Men's hopes and fears
Are here concerned with stuff more tangible.
For this land also hath its faith, and lies
Prostrate before the altars of a god
More jealous than Jehovah was of old.

Mammon awhile has cast his cankering blight
On stocks of fair and virtuous growth, and fouled
With poisonous taint the native founts and wells
Of noble feeling and of high-souled thought,
Of honour and truth and graceful charities
Whence Beauty springs. Ere she may take her throne
Must that false spirit first be exorcised,
And the air cleansed of his infection. So,
So only shall a puissant people rise
To make their land illustrious, and receive
Reflected lustre back, when they have learnt
That life hath other ends than quest of wealth,
And earth hath greater things to give than gold.

THE BARN

FIRM-BASED in mother earth immense it stands,
The ancient barn, with walls of massive stone
And broad-arched portals, that laborious hands
Reared with unselfish providence in days
When not in service of the Church alone
All human effort tended to God's praise,
But in each task, or lowly or sublime,
Men's piety and thankfulness were shown
By work that should declare in aftertime
That so they worshipped in their divers ways.

With what superb simplicity of line
Runs the long ridge of yonder mighty roof,
Surmounted where the gable-ends incline
By carven finials: those gray tiles, with moss
And lichen-stains o'ercoated, still are proof
'Gainst all the storms and tempests that can toss:
Greed and destruction, elsewhere ever rife,
Have from this peaceful building held aloof:
'Tis no fair ruin, but instinct with life,
And age has brought it honour without loss.

Inside, what depth of dim mysterious gloom,
That some great Gothic minster would befit,
Or some forgotten old Egyptian tomb!
Only the narrow slit-holes in the wall
Or doorway-chinks a glimmering light admit.
A solemn place: enthroned in such a hall,
So vast, so shadowy, with such silence filled,
Persephone below the earth might sit,
With mournful face majestically stilled,
Waiting and yearning for the spring's recall.

What faithful service through the centuries,
Year after year, in long continuous chain,
For men that toil and men that live at ease
Unheralded by fame this barn has done!
How many a harvest-yield of goodly grain
Since its unchequered annals were begun
It here has garnered for man's nutriment,
And kept safe sheltered from the invidious rain
And winter snows, while slowly came and went
Our human generations one by one!

Round it have centred as around a shrine
The simple rustic lives, only concerned
With what was immemorially divine,
The worship of the goddess of the earth.
Towards it their thoughts unceasingly have turned

In hope or fear of plenty or of dearth
For wives and children; here, the harvest stored
And a short interval from toil well earned,
The labourers have gathered round the board
And made the rafters echo to their mirth.

“Give us this day our daily bread,” we ask;
Let us remember, as the words we say,
The sombre lot of those who have the task
In sun and rain to plough and sow and reap,
Ere that can be received for which we pray.
How hardly o’er their heads a roof they keep!
The hungry mouths how barely can they fill!
A long dull struggle life consumes away;
Till bruised and crushed in poverty’s hard mill
At length with weary limbs to death they creep.

The law of old forbade the ox who trod
The corn out should go muzzled; yet do we
Grudge fellow-men their food; we ask, and God
Gives bread in plenty, bread for all to eat;
Yet mid the store that all around they see
Thousands go hungry, while the full repeat
Their unconsidered prayer. Let men take thought
For how much longer such a thing shall be.
Our Christianity doth go for naught
While gaunt starvation walks the flouting street.

THE HUNTRESSES

FORTH to the woods when the dawn is breaking
Artemis hastes with her huntress maids.
High on the hills are the echoes waking,
Rousing the deer in the glens and glades.

Hark to the hue in the forest places!
Hark, from afar on the wind is borne
Sound of the hunt as it onward races,
Distant music of hound and horn!

Blithe young hearts in the dewy morning,
Lithe young limbs with the chase aglow,
Pastime void of a peril scorning,
Dear are the joys that the hunters know.

Fair are they all, but the goddess fairer;
Fleeter than they who are fleet is she.
Never unblinded a wonder rarer
Even in dreams might a mortal see.

Burdened alone with the bow and quiver
Never their feet may fail or flag:
Far over mountain and moor and river
Fast they follow the flying stag.

Close on him now the pursuit they quicken;
Now overtaken he stands at bay,
Till through the heart by an arrow stricken
Down he crashes, a hard-won prey.

Then in the forest's far recesses
Seek they at eve a sequestered pool,
Doff their tunics, unloose their tresses,
And frolic and sport in the water cool.

THE DESERT

OH, far descried is the desert wide,
Like eternity unsealed;
But my heart is fain for a country lane,
That runs by copse and field.

Though the dawn unfold long leagues of gold,
Yet I would give it all
For one red rose that in England grows
Against a cottage wall.

Though the sun in the west go down to rest
In kingly purple clad,
Of the hills I think where I watched it sink
In the old home as a lad.

Such silver shed by the moon o'erhead
Our north may never see;
But dearer the sight of the daisies white
Upon an English lea.

In the vast lone land of stone and sand
No bourne or bound is seen ;
But it's oh to stray mid the meadow-hay,
Betwixt the hedgerows green!

Though respite sweet from the noontide heat
The waving palms may bring,
I would I were laid in a hawthorn glade,
Where the primrose peeps in spring.

Though the faces brown in the Arab town
Spell mysteries unknown,
Yet I long for the street where the neighbours greet
In the tongue that is mine own.

A GARDEN

SET in the corner of an ancient town

Gray with long age, and fallen strangely still,

A garden lies, that from a terraced hill

Backed by a red brick wall slopes gently down

Toward the small stream that feeds the old King's
Mill.

The stone arch of a bridge o'ervaults the stream

Wherein the flowery banks reflected gleam:

Roses beyond keep carnival; and then

A dark yew hedge the garden close divides

From golden meadows, whereby slowly glides

The river, soon to reach the lonely fen.

In that fair precinct, mid the ordered grass,

Borders and beds through spring and summer days,

Far into autumn frosts, are all ablaze

With colours richer than the painted glass

Some quaint old minster-window yet displays.

Each flower in season takes its post with glee;

For each its service and its due degree

In the unbroken pageantry is planned:

One blooms and fades: another hath its place,
Even as of yore the runners in the race
Passed on the flaming torch from hand to hand.

The tiny snowdrop ushers in the year:

 The crocus falls, ere March-wind music fills

 The golden trumpets of the daffodils;

Then soon like Eastern potentates appear

 The turbaned tulips: now young June distils

The precious odours of the earliest rose:

With lupins blue and white the garden glows:

 The steepled foxglove peals its tapering bells:

The rainbow-coloured iris comes to vaunt

Its christening: scarlet-robed the poppies flaunt,

 And trailing honeysuckle sweetly smells.

Like floating butterflies the gay sweet-peas

 Dance on their way to welcome blithe July,

 Whose kirtle's border, as she passes by,

Small pansies kiss: the larkspur, loved of bees,

 Uplifts its fretted spires against the sky:

Like white-stoled acolytes the lilies go,

Swinging their silver censers to and fro:

 Snapdragons decked in coats of rare device

Are masquerading: purple heliotrope

Scatters its perfume, and carnations ope

 Caskets of balmy clove and drowsy spice.

When August sees the wheat-sheaves homeward drawn
Down dusty lanes, the clusters of the phlox
Shine o'er their foliage, like the shimmering frocks
Of ladies pacing on a summer lawn.

Now in disdain the lordly hollyhocks
Shake out their ruffles: the sunflower cyclops-eyed
Stares at the sun, as not to be outvied

By his bright orb: with autumn you may view
The starry asters, a resplendent host:
Chrysanthemums their orient lineage boast,
And Christmas roses bid the year adieu.

There never voices of the birds are mute:

From ivy and tree blithe finches all day long
Multiply greetings, and for grievous wrong
Despite nice heed wreaked on the ripening fruit
Blackbird and thrush give recompense of song.

Fleet swallows in many a giddy twist and loop
Dart through the air or o'er the water swoop:

Sometimes the nightingale exalts his theme,
Of love for ever passionate and true
Sworn champion; sometimes, a quick speck of blue,
A kingfisher may flicker down the stream.

How good a thing it is, reclining there

At ease on some hot summer afternoon,
Where gnarled old apple-trees afford the boon

Of shelter from the sun's imperious glare,
To listen idly to the drowsy croon
Of the old water-wheel, while memory strays
Mid pleasant things of old, and happy days,
Or fancy wanders forward, free to build
A future that it knows can never be,
Where hopeless dreams are sweet reality,
And vainest aspirations are fulfilled.

A CRETAN CUP

THE spade at Knossos yielded up
From palace dust this little cup.

'Tis a mere trifle, nothing worth;
A toy from which a doll might sup;
Yet ere the Sphinx it had its birth.

The pyramids, that seem as though
They must have stood there even so,
In granite immortality,
Since first the Nile began to flow,
Have not such ancient memory.

The hoariest relics of our own,
Barrow, and circle set with stone,
Cromlech, and cairn, and menhir gray,
To less antiquity depone
Than this poor fragile piece of clay.

Four thousand years it may have lain
Buried below, and now again
It sees the light, and there it stands,

As perfect, save for earthy stain,
As when it left the potter's hands.

How mighty had his wonder been
Could the poor craftsman have foreseen
That learned men, long ages thence,
Over his handiwork would lean
With rapt and serious reverence.

Were it some wondrous monument
Whereon a nation's toil was spent
That Time restored us without scathe,
Some image solemn of intent,
Some symbol of an ancient faith

With awful sanctity endowed,
To which long generations bowed
As to a thing divine and great,
And countless prayers and offerings vowed,
'Twere not so strange a freak of fate.

But now it makes the mind aghast
To think yon trifle should outlast
The pomp of empires—what renown
Is swallowed in the silent past,
While jetsam such as this comes down.

What pause to pride the thought must give,
That man, himself so fugitive,
Can in a few brief minutes' space
Fashion a thing that shall outlive
All other record of his race.

The men who lived in those old years
Knew love and hate and mirth and tears:
They planned great policies and schemes;
Their hearts were filled with hopes and fears;
They did their deeds and dreamed their dreams.

Yet of the labour of their brain,
Of all their passion, all their pain,
Of all their stirrings of the soul,
Naught knew we. Is the spirit then vain,
And cheaper than an earthen bowl?

Or shall we answer, unafraid,
That things of lifeless matter made
May keep unchanged their pristine form,
While spirit goes from grade to grade,
As fashioned after other norm?

THE SINGER

I HEARD a voice in the evening air
Singing that life was very fair,
That earth and heaven and day and night
Were dedicate to heart's delight.

Snatches of song, like golden gleams
Of sunlight upon April streams,
Soared up aloft with buoyant swell,
And then in softened cadence fell.

Their theme was all the joy of earth,
Wonder of spring, and children's mirth,
Beauty of woman's face and form,
Beauty of sunshine, rain, and storm.

They told of cowslip-covered meads,
Of high resolves and noble deeds,
Of southern cities, waters blue,
And happy day-dreams coming true.

Whether their sense was thus or not
Such images the words begot,
With fairy colours all aglow
Like bubbles that a child may blow.

Ah, though they perish like a wrack,
These are the moments that come back
To memory in the after-years,
When weightier burden disappears.

THE SWALLOWS

AUTUMN returns, and now in restless ranks
The swallows, see, are gathering for their flight;
The willow-beds beside the river banks
Fill with the twittering myriads that unite.
No more in English fields they take delight,
In dewy pastures, or in meadows green,
Or stream or pond whereby they used to play;
No more about the eaves shall they be seen;
An inward call they cannot contravene
Is urgent on them, and they must away.

They must away ere the last rose expire,
Ere the last fields are lightened of their corn.
They dare not wait to see the woods afire,
Or hoarfrost sparkle on the grass at morn.
They fear to see the wayside banks forlorn
Of all their summer wealth; they fear to feel
The chilly mists, that now at evenfall
Begin with clammy tentacles to steal
Along the river-levels, and conceal
The dripping valleys in their billowy pall.

By what mysterious instinct are they taught
That, when our northern days turn drear and cold,
The honeyed summer may elsewhere be sought,
And southern lands afar are bathed in gold?
What messenger the trysting-place has told?
What compass theirs for guidance, or what chart?
What pilot that they follow without fear?
Who biddeth them make ready to depart?
What leader gives the signal for the start,
And sets them on the course that they must steer?

O'er wide, waste seas lies their appointed track,
Where the waves whiten and the shrill wind sings.
No tarrying can be, no turning back,
No slackening of the wistful, weary wings.
Comrade to straining comrade closely clings;
The eyes agleam, the constant eager cheep
Comfort and courage to the flagging lend;
Yet many a one his place must fail to keep,
Must faint and fall and perish in the deep,
Nor ever reach his pilgrimage's end.

Was it for this ye left the sheltering eaves,
Ill-fated ones? Had ye not better found
A bier beneath the tender faded leaves,
Resting upon the firm familiar ground,
The landmarks known to you of old around,

Not far from home? The petrels that outbrave
The rage of wildest gales, and daily ply
Their trade in ocean, 'neath the trackless wave
Find fitly their inviolable grave;
'Tis not for our loved swallows there to lie.

But ah, we cannot keep you; so farewell!

Farewell alike to those that come no more,
And those that shall return next year to dwell
Upon our spring-rejuvenated shore!

Ye know the welcome that was yours before
Waits ever on your advent: pay no heed
To timid counsellors who preach delays,
But come back quickly. Sore will be our need
After long winter. 'Tis not spring indeed
Until the swallows sweep the flowery ways.

SPRING

SPRING enters first like to a little child,
Who peeps, half shyly, half in playfulness,
From out the shelter of her mother's dress,
By loving gestures not to be beguiled,
Nor tender chiding, quite to show her face,
Or wholly leave her trusted hiding-place
To seek in alien arms a strange caress.

Then is she seen like to a frolic maid,
Who mirth-encompassed, innocent of care,
Plays with the sunshine playing in her hair,
And in the fairy robe of hope arrayed
Looks eagerly with gleaming April eyes
Down the bright vista of her life's emprise,
Prefiguring all her golden thoroughfare.

Last, comes she decked in blossom as a bride,
Who on the day whereof her heart was fain
Stands with her snowy veil and broidered train
Before the altar, in her beauty's pride,
To plight her troth, while those whom she shall
leave
E'en for that flower of fairness most must grieve
That she shall never be a child again.

ACCORDING TO HOMER

MEET it is a maid should win
Knowledge how to weave and spin,
That her slender fingers be
Deft to do embroidery:
She must learn to wind the reel,
And to ply the busy wheel,
To milk the kine, and churn the cream,
And wash the linen in the stream:
She must watch the rising yeast,
Dress the meal, and serve the feast,
Doing all with ready grace
And an ever-smiling face.
So she wins, where men resort,
For herself a good report,
Gladdening her parents' hearts
By her skill in household arts,
And in wedded days to come
Fills with wealth her husband's home.

DAY-DREAMS

NOT in the dreams that come with sleep at night,
But in the day-dreams of our hours of waking
Find we the fairest havens of delight,
Brief intervals of refuge and respite
From the rough waves of fortune o'er us breaking.

The dreams of night unmeaningly are patched
With shreds of trivial days and divers places:
From memory's dungeons, left in sleep unlatched,
Escape forgotten inmates oddly matched,
A motley fantasy of casual faces.

Day-dreams are vestments for the shivering heart,
By yearning self-deception subtly woven,
When faded hopes and aims long laid apart
Once more upon a golden journey start,
Awhile oblivious that they e'er were cloven.

Dreams of the night are oft-times filled with fear,
Whereof not bravest hearts can make subdual:

Dark things of evil round dim corners peer,
From open coffins masks of horror leer,
Or down blind ways we flee some dread pursual.

In day-dreams we by hand or brain have done
Deeds that are elsewhere unfulfilled for ever:
The race wherein we failed again is run,
The verdict is reversed, and we have won
The envied prize of all our lost endeavour.

TIBERIUS

THE sands run out. Soon I, Tiberius Claudius,
Caesar, Augustus, Imperator—and
An old unhappy man, shall be relieved
Of this distasteful greatness, and may lay
My weary limbs in earth. There shall I join
Drusus my brother, dead so long ago,
Drusus, who loved me, and my only son,
Vipsania's child and mine—Vipsania, Drusus,
My son, those three who for so brief a space
Lightened my loneliness, and one by one,
Each by a fate so cruel, so malignant,
Were parted from me—may it haply be
In that dim afterworld, whose portals loom
So dark, so dubious, whether life be boon
Or burden, always open to receive
But nevermore to loose—ah, may it be—
For naught is sure—that I shall once again
Embrace them, clasp them fast to my heart, and see
The light of welcome leap into their eyes?
That were indeed a recompense for all
That I have suffered, recompense for all
The years of solitude, the long sad years

Of power supreme, by those so dearly prized
Who ne'er have known its bitterness, to me
So little worth, so gladly laid aside.
But who shall say what may be? Never yet
Have human eyes e'en by a hair-breadth passed
The impenetrable barriers of death.
I too ere now in secret oft have sought
By divination and by magic arts
To follow fate down to the dark abode
Where on immutable throne she sits obscure,
By awe and gloom enshrouded, thence to wrest
Some clue to make the doubtful course more clear
Along life's labyrinth. In those shadowy ways
Uncertain shapes and vague appearances
Have oft deluded me; yet whene'er I reached
To grasp with eager arms the imagined prize,
They melted, as did once Eurydice,
When Orpheus, heedless of the warning, turned
To gaze too soon upon his ransomed bride;
And I like him was left baffled and mocked.
This world is all our own. Wisest are they
Who seek not through futurity to find
Motive for present action, or reward
To give a worth to virtue, or redress
For what is here amiss; but in themselves
Can recognize some deep instinctive force
Which, independent of external aid,

Alone is full incentive to a life
Of noble purpose, and itself alone
Is rule and test of right. Such ask no praise
Of gods or men; such need no promised gain
To countervail immediate sacrifice;
Ardent, unfaltering, fearless, and resolved
They march along life's path, content to feel
If conscience can commend then all is well.

Yet few are they who thus against attack
Go triple-steeled. Our human hearts are weak,
And own subjection to mortality.
Rulers of men and humblest of the earth,
Meek or aspiring, famous or unknown,
Good, bad, rich, poor, we all of us alike
Crave that the hearts of other men shall beat
Responsive echo unto ours, and share
Our hopes and disappointments, joys and fears.

Never through weakling fear of the ill-will
Of the ignorant and ignoble multitude
Flinched I as yet from following the course
That wisdom and the welfare of the state
Demanded; yet to none less than to me,
Far other than they deem, not knowing me,
Is the good report of men indifferent.
He who in this rough struggle of the world
Would play a manly part is forced to wear

A mask upon his face, hiding the show
Of human feeling, lest his enemies
Rejoice, seeing how their malicious shafts
Rankle within his heart. Yet none the less
The wounds bleed inwardly. Too well I know
The people hate me, nor can consciousness
Of work well done wholly o'ercome the pain.

I have striven through life to serve my country well.
In youth upon her farthest frontiers
Against the wild barbarian hordes I led
The limitary legions, and through years
Of strenuous conflict in all fields upheld
Her old renown untarnished, nor myself
Shunned ever toil or danger, nor disgraced
My noble name and famous ancestry.
'Twas in my country's cause that I endured
To leave the wife I loved, gentle and true,
And thereby cast the shadow on my days
That ne'er has lightened—O Vipsania,
Pardon me, pity me, for indeed I think
That I most needed pity, forced to wed
That other, Julia, and dispart our lives,
That else had tuned harmonious unto death.
Julia—oh still that thrice-accursed name
Recalls my degradation. Tied to her
I sounded all the depths of self-contempt.
Helpless to hold her back, or cast her off,

I felt myself the accomplice of her guilt,
And was ashamed to show my face in Rome.
Oh, I was weak, was wrong, ever to yield
Consent, consent at length, howe'er reluctant,
Although Augustus did himself enjoin
Our union:—for no subtle policy,
That in the execution of its aim
Scorns the old sacred household ties, can bring
Strength to the public weal; nor yet can one
Whose heart is bitter and whose hearth is cursed,
Who cannot shake the dull and heavy weight
Of aching memory off, but still must brood
Self-centred on his own calamities—
Never can he, so to misfortune doomed,
Bestow to serve his fellow men the same
Generous singlemindedness, the same
Unswerving zeal and stern intensity
Of high devotion, as that happier one,
Who from the loud confusion and the cries
That echo round the paths of public men
Retiring, in the dear society
Of those who greet his entrance with the name
Of husband and of father, can inbreathe
Peace for his spirit, consolation sweet
Mid trial, toil, and care, and ever fresh
Courage to face erect the coming day.
Augustus so through fifty arduous years

Could seek and find a haven in his home
By Livia's side; and there in simple joys
His happiest hours were spent. Such joys I knew,
I also, once, only to lose them. Me
He suffered not to keep what for himself
He held so dear, but by that dread command
Robbed me for ever of felicity.

These twenty years I have kept watch and ward
At my laborious post, ruling alone
This mighty empire that Augustus forged
And welded into one; and then to me
Gave dying, as a sacred heritage
In trust for Rome, under injunction I
Should keep and hand it down inviolate
To my successors—burden all too great
For one man's back to bear, while those whose aid
I trusted in have failed me or betrayed me.
Not of my seeking was this dignity.
I cared not for autocracy, and had fain
Seen the old orders, clothed with their old rights,
Resume their ancient share of governance.
'Tis not expedient that one man should stand
So far above his fellows, and be hailed
By flatterers as a god,—it is not well
That to a mortal's hands should be committed
Power so illimitable. I, when I received
This absolute charge, had long while overlived

The passions and the vanities of youth.
I had approved my qualities to the world,
Discharged high offices, held great commands,
Known good and evil fortune; I stood out
By Rome's unanimous voice the single man
Sufficient to succeed the great Augustus.
But what of the untried boy who at my death
Shall take my place, and suddenly be promoted
Sole master of mankind? What peril lies
Herein for all! Will not this dizzy height
Fill his weak brain with overweening thoughts
And mad presumption, till he deem himself
A god on earth, and to his wildest whims
Claim the whole world shall be subservient?
My mind misgives me; sorely I misdoubt
What shall befall when a mere foolish youth
Controls unchecked this empire's destiny.

Meantime the Senate in whose ranks once sat
Rome's noblest sons, from whose mouth issued forth
Traditionary wisdom, now has sunk
Into a crowd of slaves, with fawning mien
And cringing tongues, each scheming to surpass
His neighbour only in servility.
And this same Roman people that of old
Stormed through the world and made their greatness
felt
In conflict and in council—how debased,

How despicable now! For naught they care
Save daily to be pampered and amused.
The state concerns them not, so they may glut
Their lust for blood in gladiatorial shows,
And get unearned their punctual dole of corn.

Amid these scenes what other eye but mine
Scans the dark clouds that rim the horizon round,
And fateful omens, clearer far than those
Read in the smoking entrails of a beast?
Already from the lands beyond the Rhine
And Danube come premonitory rumours,
Rumblings and mutterings hoarse and confused—
The muffled march of nations under arms—
Like those dull subterranean thunderings,
Portents of nature's wrath, that oft forewarn
Of peril impending o'er the earth, ere yet
Her fiery deep foundations are upheaved
By some convulsion, that in one blind hour
Of elemental rage can overwhelm
The industrious toil of ages, and transform
Order and plenty to a blackened waste.
My policy has looked beyond the walls
Of Rome, beyond the bounds of Italy.
The hostile tribes have everywhere been held
At bay within their borders, and been taught
To reverence the Roman majesty.
No single inch of ground have I abandoned

Or lost to our foes, in all the continents
Entrusted to my hands. The provinces
Have ever found me zealous to protect them
'Gainst rapine and injustice, resolute
To punish all oppression, fraud, and wrong.
At home have I been vigilant to assuage
Faction, and with severity to quell
Sedition, that would quickly else have raised
Its jealous head, and lightly once again
Deluged the groaning land with civil blood.
Such ends have I pursued, none helping me,
And rancour and detraction my reward.
Ah, who shall blame me if in darker hours,
Despairing of my thankless task, deep galled
By cold ingratitude, every word and deed
Still misconceived and misinterpreted,
I cannot check the indignant cry of anguish
Forced from my heart, thinking how faithfully
I have laboured, and how men misunderstand?

Yet why care I whether this abject age
Approve my life? Such approbation given
Perhaps were rather insult, as implying
My stature nearer theirs. They cannot gauge
The scope of my achievement, nor conceive
How dire had been the chaos had I failed.

Yet am I not regardless of my name.
Often best effort is inspired to think

How work now slighted or abused shall meet,
When time is ripe, with that due meed of praise
Withheld by envious inability
Or plodding ignorance. I know my trust
Has fitly been sustained, and am content
To wait the acknowledgement of history.
To nobler days than these I make appeal,
And worthier judges: fearless I invoke
The jurisdiction of posterity,
And claim the verdict. When the party hates
And private animosities, that warp
The judgment even of just men, are all
Forgotten in the grave; when slanderous tales,
Spawned in the sink of Rome, like noisome flies
Are brushed aside in generous disdain,—
When all is known and weighed—then, then at last,
In the great judgment hall of future time,
Shall the plain record of my life refute
The calumnies of my traducers. Then
Shall Truth, invincible Truth, from her august
Tribunal, raised on high over the din
Of vulgar tongues, pronounce upon my work—
That e'er the State's advantage I preferred
To mine own private interest or ease—
And set my name with those who have deserved
Well of their country. Whether soon or late
This thing I know shall be, and therefore now
Gladly I lay my task down and depart.

A STORM

ON the rock-bound coast with roar and din
The murderous rollers thunder in.
The shrill wind screams, and the salt spray drives,
And the hoarse sea calls for human lives.

The children a day ago defied
With sand-built castles the lapping tide
That now ten thousand furies urge
To frenzy with relentless scourge.

On the old stone-pier with faces pale
A group of women confronts the gale,
For still in the harbour is incomplete
The tale of the boats of the fishing-fleet.

Hour upon hour they stand and strain
Sad eyes that still must search in vain;
Their men they nevermore may see,
Their children fatherless shall be.

The seagulls hover and drift o'erhead,
And the women hear their wails with dread;
For well they know that each plaintive sound
Is the passing-bell of a sailor drowned.

Deep in the ample ocean's womb
Shall straight be delved his wave-walled tomb:
The black storm-cloud shall be his pall,
And foam for flowers about him fall.

A SONG OF THE SENSES

MANY things are fair to view—

Roses in their crimson prime,
Daffodils of golden hue,
Branches silvered o'er with rime.
Yet for fairness first I place
Fairness of my lady's face.

Many things are sweet to hear—

Music of a rippling sea,
Nightingales divinely clear,
Flute and viol's melody.
Yet of all I most rejoice
In my lady's sweet low voice.

Many things delight the taste—

Fruit still warm with summer sun,
Honey in the comb encased,
Wine from southern vintage won.
Yet in these lies no such bliss
As in my dear lady's kiss.

Many things have fragrant smell—

Violets on a morn of May,
Gorse upon a mountain-fell,
Meadows deep in new-mown hay.
Yet of these none equaleth
Fragrance of my lady's breath.

Many things are soft to feel—

Silk cocoons of golden gloss,
Carded wool upon the wheel,
Banks bespread with downy moss.
Yet in vain for aught I seek
Soft as my dear lady's cheek.

Sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch

Testify, though in their kind
Other sweets of sweet have much,
She hath more of all combined.
Yet they praise her smallest part,
Praising not my lady's heart.

LOVE'S ASSIZE

GO, for the lists of love are ever set:

New knights haste ever to his great assize,
Where fair young maidens are for ever met
To watch their prowess, and award the prize.
Love's flags are flying and his trumpets peal:
Loudly resounds the clash of steel on steel.
Go, gallant youth, thy virgin arms assay;
The heralds call; ride forward to the fray.

'Tis the same field wherein thy father fought
When as thine own his mettle was untried;
And there the honourable deeds he wrought
Whereby he won thy mother for his bride.
Still on that day their memories fondly dwell;
Still are they proud the tale thereof to tell.
Shalt thou be son of theirs, and yet delay?
Go, gallant youth; ride forward to the fray.

Fasten thy lady's favour on thy helm,
And in her name make thou thy challenge high;

Then charge, encounter, smite, and overwhelm,
Till vanquished on the ground thy rivals lie.
So nobly stained with toil and dust and heat
Lay thou thy trophies at thy lady's feet.
Go, gallant youth; and at the close of day
Bring home thy bride in triumph from the fray.

SICILY

'SWEET is the sound of yonder whispering pine,
And sweet, O goatherd, is that pipe of thine."
So sang Theocritus, and in mine ear
The magic words had echoed many a year.
We too at length have crossed the sea
And roamed the enchanted isle of Sicily.

Within the flowery fields our feet have strayed
That knew Persephone a mirthful maid,
Or e'er to realms of Hades she was borne,
And sad Demeter searched the world forlorn,
Until the gods bade Hermes bring
Her daughter back to earth with days of spring.

In these glad waters Galatea played,
While the rough Cyclops wooed the wanton maid.
To her the foam was more than flower or tree,
Nor flute could match the music of the sea;
Dearer to her the tinted wave
Than pine-clad hill or ivy-trellised cave.

And we have spied the goatherd on the rock
Piping of love, or summoning his flock;
And marked along the cliff the browsing goats
Follow obedient to the plaintive notes,
While on their necks as home they fare
The soft bells tinkle in the evening air.

We saw Taormina on her craggy height,
Clad all in spotless almond-blossom white.
Some pale snow-maiden prisoned there she seems,
Or fairy princess of a land of dreams,
Who by her mortal lover kissed
Melts in a moment like a wreath of mist;

Or so, half hidden by the driving spray,
Her white limbs glistening 'gainst the granite gray,
Andromeda beside the water's edge
Stood bound and fettered to the rocky ledge:
Pitiful victim, by her fate
The curse upon the land to expiate.

Yearly, it may be, in this vision sweet,
Nature, at spring's return, our eyes doth greet
With symbol of her loved Hellenic race,
For our remembrance, when we see the grace
Of that fair flower before the leaf,
As their own genius beautiful and brief.

We saw transcendent Etna's gleaming snows
Flushed in the sunrise like a crimson rose,
And all its giant girth at evenfall
Draped in a many-folded purple pall,
While the wide heavens unfurled on high
The scarlet pennons of their pageantry.

Syracuse, silent city of the dead,
Where is thy greatness gone, thy glory fled?
Naught but the cart-ruts o'er the rocky plain
Point the proud limits of thine old domain.
Tyche, Neapolis, where are they?
Where Achradina, where Epipolae?

And yet what memories of what mighty men
Of Roman, Norman, and of Saracen,
Of Greek and Carthaginian still survive,
So that thou being dead art yet alive,
And thy eternal fame is told
In lands undreamed of by thy sons of old.

There the great harbour lies whose bosom bright
Was once the scene of that momentous fight,
Upon whose issue, as it doubtful swung,
The fate of Athens and her empire hung;
Fight that for evermore will rage
Sculptured upon the Greek historian's page.

There still we see the Athenians fiercely strain
To force a passage to the open main:
There still we see the clash of ship on ship
And watch them struggle locked in desperate grip,
And hear the cries that rend the air
Of friends and foes in triumph or despair.

I think that quarry, though now blooming gay
With flowers and fruit, has ne'er forgot the day
When those ill-fated prisoners it confined,
And how in shame and agony they pined;
But still its conscious depths retain
Some haunting memory of bygone pain.

Through yon theatre, long so still, has rolled
The voice of Aeschylus, what time he told
Some tragic tale of fate-encompassed life,
Or sang the glories of the Persian strife,
While his rapt audience, tier on tier,
Sat breathless all a summer day to hear.

Inscribed on yonder stone may yet be seen
The age-resisting words "Philistis, Queen."
She whose mere image on a coin can thrill
All hearts with tender adoration still,
Here in a mortal woman's guise
Did Aphrodite's self idealize.

Those slopes with olives and with almonds lined
Once held the fairest city of mankind.

Ah, that time's sepulchre could be unsealed,
And once again to men could be revealed
The vision that to Pindar's eye
With his own Hellas could in splendour vie!

Five times five centuries have passed and gone
Since Acragas in all her grandeur shone;
Yet hath the earth no beauty more divine
Than those her temples, ranged in wondrous line
Round the encarping cliff's high crest,
Stained with the glory of the glowing west.

See yon chaotic masses waste and lone,
Like some tempestuous ocean turned to stone.
This was Selinus. Here in scorn of time
Her mighty monuments uprose sublime.
Titan her youth, too soon to know
The greatness of a Titan's overthrow.

Low in the dust long since her walls were laid
And desolate long since her streets were made:
Long has her harbour sunk beneath the wave;
Her temples lie like tombstones on her grave,
Stones that shall ne'er be rolled away
Till the dawn rise upon the judgment-day.

In the vast stillness of a lonely land
The giant columns of a temple stand.
He who the spirit of that place can feel
O'er which the centuries unheeded steal
Shall with awed reverence learn to know
The greatness of the gods of long ago.

We felt the fascination of thy spell,
Fair sun-clad city of the Golden Shell.
In perfumed gardens gay with tropic flowers
How sweet to dream away the idle hours,
Watching the while the sunbeams dance,
Or musing o'er a tale of old romance.

In church and palace what delight to trace
The Norman strength, the Saracenic grace;
Or upon those resplendent walls peruse
The bible-story set in lustrous hues;
Or read the names of kings who lie
In those deep porphyry sarcophagi!

Beautiful isle, how eager erst to greet,
How slow to leave thee our reluctant feet!
Heavy at heart, as evening merged in night,
We watched thy outlines sinking out of sight,
Till the last hill-top came to be
One with the wide circumference of sea.

VIGNETTES FROM GREECE

How avid of delight to be

We rowed ashore that winter day,
And landed by the little quay,

While still the morning sky was gray!
Then soon the snow-clad Locrian peaks
Were clothed as in a flaming fleece;
The dawn came forth with rosy cheeks,
And we were on the soil of Greece.

What radiant clearness had the air!

The bosom of the gulf whereby
We journeyed was a blue so fair

It seemed an earth-bound strip of sky.
Bemused as in a dream we passed

By many a name of old renown,
And with the twilight reached at last
The city of the violet crown.

Athens, from thee did beauty first

Spring forth supreme in sudden fire,
E'en as thy guardian Pallas burst
Armed from the forehead of her sire.

Thou wert the mighty founthead whence
Descended to all time to be
Letters and art and eloquence,
Wit, statecraft, and philosophy.

Methinks the traveller ne'er shall spend
A moment more divine than this,
When first his eager feet ascend
The steps of the Acropolis—
When first past those tall porticoes
Full on his awestruck eyes have shone
In splendid pomp of solemn rows
The pillars of the Parthenon.

Speak not: for speech is here no room.
This is the soul—a shining sun—
Of that transcendent race for whom
Beauty and godhead were as one.
What place were meeter for a god,
Save where, each gate a single gem,
Its walls of gold, the angel's rod
Measured the new Jerusalem?

Yon hill beheld the solemn Court
Where doom was passed for man's blood spilt;
Here did Orestes once resort,
To get purgation of his guilt;

And here we tread the very ground
Whereon the feet of Paul once trod,
When with that scornful audience round
He stood and preached the unknown God.

Little they dreamed, that sceptic crowd,
How by the God that day unknown
Their creeds and superstitions proud
Should be supplanted and o'erthrown ;
How she who stood with spear and shield,
Mistress of that majestic shrine,
Her place and power ere long should yield
Unto a maiden more divine.

From Athens one May-morn we drove—
Ah, shall we drive there e'er again?—
By orchard and by olive grove
Across the dusty Attic plain ;
Through shady woods around the base
Of scarred Pentelicus we went,
And reached at length a level space
Between the sea and mountains pent.

There, where the swift Euboean Strait
Curves in to form a crescent bay,
Did two small cities vindicate
Europe from Asiatic sway.

Though two score centuries have dispersed
The dust of those that field who won,
Still on the roll of fame stand first
The men who fought at Marathon.

Happy were they who lived to tell
Their children's children of the fight,
And happy they who nobly fell
Defending sacred freedom's right.
Their memory lives in yonder mound;
Green o'er their ashes grow the trees;
And all about, the hallowed ground
Is red with wild anemones.

We climbed Pendeli's broken side,
Past those old quarries whence was won
The sparkling marble age has dyed
With hues of gold and cinnamon.
By brake and shale our way we gained,
Heedless of scorching noontide heat,
Till, the last ridge at length attained,
We saw the world below our feet.

Landward the little Attic state
Discovered all its hills and dales,
And on the Salaminian Strait
We caught a glint of sunlit sails;

The distant snow in silver streaks
On mountains of Morea shone,
While north the twin Parnassian peaks
Uptowered o'er purple Helicon.

To right, Euboean vistas ope;
To left, Hymettus loved of bees
Sinks down in many a thyme-clad slope
Towards Sunium and the Cyclades;
Seaward as far as sight could reach
Dim islands melted into haze;
We seemed in wonder passing speech
To touch the summit of our days.

Pass through the lion-guarded gate,
That stands there as it stood of old,
And see forlorn and desolate
Wide-wayed Mycenae rich in gold.
Hence royal Agamemnon rode
To war around the Trojan wall;
To Clytemnestra here he owed
Death in his own ancestral hall.

There in a circle set with stones,
Where dim tradition faintly clings,
Some vanished race interred the bones
Of some great dynasty of kings.

Gold masks and ornaments they bore,
Gold all about them lay profuse,
With things for toilet, food, and war,
To serve the pale ghosts' daily use.

Ah, with what wonderment and awe,
As round a bend the roadway led
Toward Sparta, all at once we saw
An endless range of peaks outspread!
Snow-white was every crest and crown
Along the mighty mountain-chain,
Where lofty Taygetus looks down
On hollow Lacedaemon's plain.

Yea, Nature's beauty still is there;
There still the cold Eurotas runs;
But where the warrior city, where
Sparta, that mother of brave sons?
A modern street, forlorn and mean—
Fragments of stone about the fields—
No more, in sign of what hath been,
The little country village yields.

There, where divine Alpheus flows
Beside the pine-engirdled plain,
What wildly-scattered blocks are those,
Like litter of a vast moraine?

Obliterating time hath rolled

O'er that famed spot with little ruth,
Where Greece assembled to behold
The strength and swiftness of her youth.

And yet one relic chance hath spared,

To show unto how fair a thing
That human form, for which they cared
So lovingly, the Greeks could bring.
In bloom of perfect beauty shown,
Such as the world no longer sees
It stands unrivalled and alone,
The Hermes of Praxiteles.

Delphi, if ever spot may shed

Strange influence from events of yore,
Thee must the pagan faith long dead
Haunt like a dream for evermore.
High on Parnassus yet must ring
The echoes of Apollo's lyre;
And still the clear Castalian spring
Must touch the lips with ancient fire.

From far and near upon the main,

From kings and cities oversea,
Came envoys hither to obtain
Foreknowledge of what things should be.

Here in the mystic Pythian cave,
Upon the vapour-veiled tripod,
The fume-filled panting priestess gave
The dark responses of the god.

That eve, as sullen sank the night,
What solemn gloom o'erhung the scene!
Huge storm-clouds brooded o'er the height,
And plunged in dread the deep ravine.
The gusty storm-wind muttered hoarse,
The thunder rumbled dull and low,
As though each elemental force
Mourned for the Sun-god's overthrow.

Past isles, whose outlines dimly drawn
Upon the dark we strained to greet,
All night we sailed, and with the dawn
Discovered hundred-citied Crete.
Ne'er on another mountain-height
Did snow so dazzling blind the sense;
No other southern sea can cite
A blue so vivid and intense.

With Candia what can else compare?
What picture can with that account
Which met us in the market square
Beside the old Venetian fount?

What tapestry of pattern strange
That gay kaleidoscopic crowd
Weaves, as it moves in flickering change,
Mid never ceasing babel loud!

Superb old men against the walls
Smoke with serene and stately air;
Beneath striped awnings on the stalls
The women spread their country fare;
Girl after girl with sun-browned face
Her pitcher at the fountain dips,
Raises it full with easy grace,
And bears it poised on shapely hips.

Yet may these words—mere shadows pale,
Faint far-off echoes—ne'er portray
A magic that can never fail,
A glamour fading not away.
Though circumstance my feet may chain,
Yet pilgrim memory ne'er shall cease
By day and night to roam again
The consecrated land of Greece.



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